

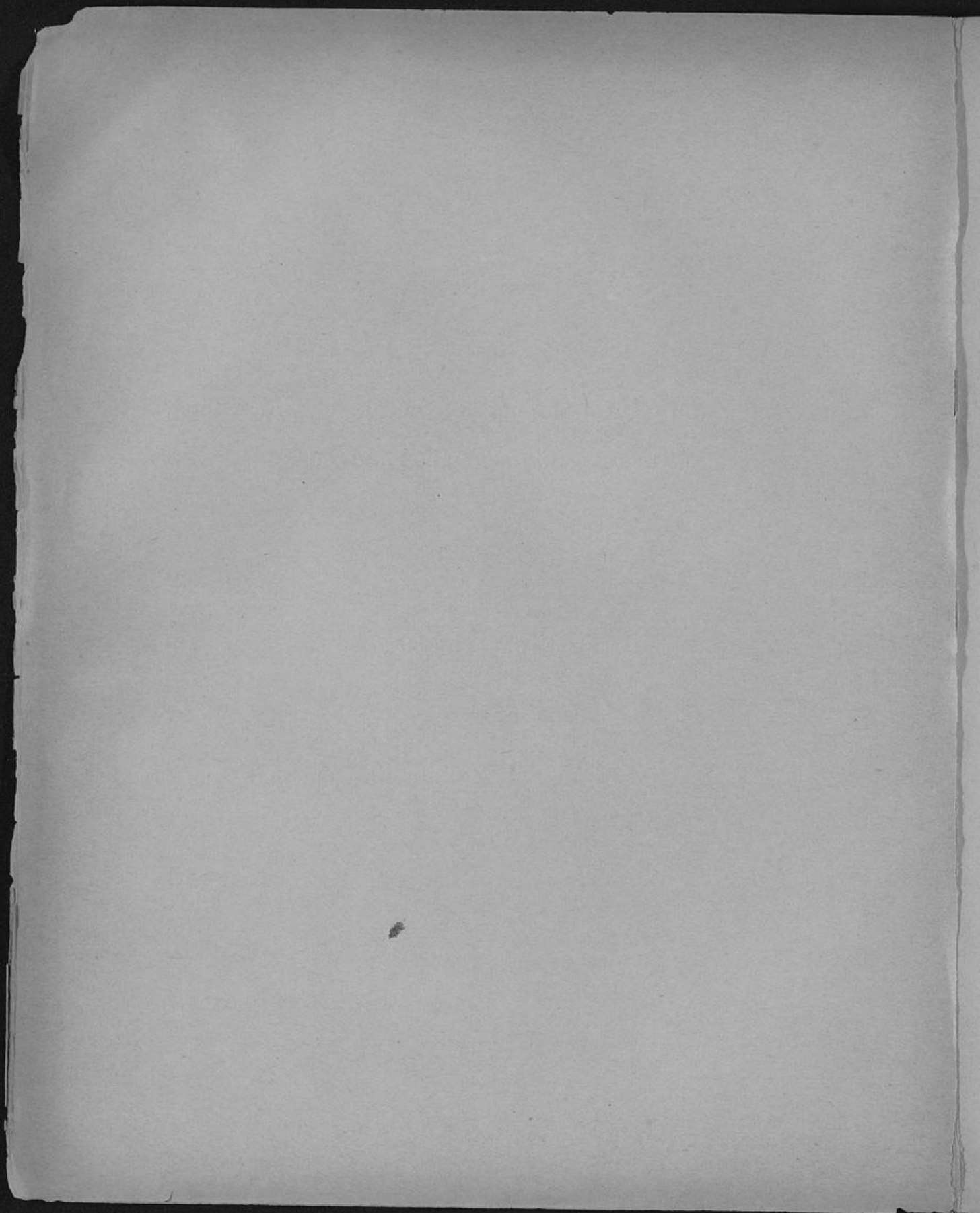
On Shakespeare's Hamlet.

History of the old Tale of Hamlet, on the old Play of Hamlet,
and on the two editions of 1603 and 1604.

By

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On
Shakespeare's Hamlet.

As it may be safely said that Shakespeare is of all English writers the one whose productions have been the most carefully analysed and illustrated, the most eloquently expounded and criticised, the most universally admired and known¹: it is equally true that his tragedy Hamlet, though not the best of his pieces², for it must leave that rank to Macbeth and Lear³ and cannot perhaps be placed immediately after these — is one of the most popular of his works⁴; that it is chiefly owing to this piece that Shakespeare became known to other countries⁵ (for which reason we often find him quoted as „the poet of Hamlet“); and that it has for us Germans as well as for the French the especial importance of having greatly influenced some of our poets⁶ and helped to introduce a new period in the history of literature⁷.

However the author's time has handed down to posterity too insignificant informations⁸ for the philologists, who require not only an authentic text, but also want to know under which impressions and circumstances it was written, and why it was written as they find it. Now, Shakespeare himself besides writing his immortal works, did nothing to make himself further known to us, i. e. to let us have a peep into his study⁹, as f. i. Goethe did in his *Wahrheit und Dichtung*. His contemporaries gave us as little information concerning him as concerning every other great man of those days¹⁰, and forgot him — though no more than almost every celebrated man has had his share in that — still before he died¹¹. We must add to this that the short-sightedness of his relations¹² and greater enemies still¹³, destroyed

¹ I will only mention Ben Jonson, who sang already of him:
Triumph, my Britain! thou hast one to show
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe!
He was not of an age but for all time!

(To the memory of Shakesp.)

² Börne (Ges. Schriften I, 375) says: „Hamlet is not the most admirable of Shakespeare's works; but Shakesp. is most admirable in Hamlet.“

³ cf.; Drake, Sh. and his time II, 469; Genée, p. 374. Guizot (Sh., ses oeuvres et son temps p. 199) prefers Macbeth und Othello.

⁴ cf. Elze, Sh's Hamlet, Einleit. p. III. Friesen, (Briefe VII p. 105) however does not think it was popular during Sh's life.

⁵ France f. i. (also Germany though Elze denies it); cf. Elze, Abhandl. zu Sh. „Hamlet in Frankr. p. 2.)

⁶ cf. Elze, Sh.-Abhandl. p. 80; Goethe's Gedicht „Zwischen zwei Welten“.

⁷ cf. Genée. p. 296 & 304; Elze Sh's Hamlet p. III.

⁸ Steeven's laconic account of Shakespeare's life is still all what we know for certain of this great poet.

⁹ cf. Elze, Shakespeare, p. 6 (top lines).

¹⁰ Perhaps we should have been better provided if Boswell had lived in Sh's time.

¹¹ cf. Elze, Sh. p. 3; Prolegomena to Shakespeare's plays: p. 190. „History of opinion on the writings of Sh.“ in the suppl. vol. to his pict. ed. p. 340 f.) attempts to prove that Sh. was never forgotten.

¹² As they were Puritans they will not have looked with too favourable an eye upon Sh's writings for the stage; they surely did never think of preserving anything that had regard to Sh. as a dramatic poet.

¹³ A succession of fires: in Jonson's house, in Stratford, and in London.

most likely what might perhaps disperse some of our doubts and uncertainties with regard to Shakespeare; and last that the Puritanical reaction in the political life of England commenced only a short time after our poet.¹

Thus the widest range was left for every kind of inquiries into Shakespeare's writings (and surely we cannot expect them to have always been the happiest) as soon as one lucky hand² had endeavoured to withdraw them again from so unjust an oblivion. Many and manifold researches have accordingly been made since,³ chiefly in England, Germany, and France, either to write the life of the poet, or to recover the authentic text of his works, or to find out their sources, or to explain that which time, bad transmission, or other circumstances had rendered unintelligible. The works on Shakespeare and Shakespearean pieces have consequently become almost innumerable;⁴ and Hamlet, as it happens to present many difficulties to be overcome, has filled many a volume,⁵ which, I am sorry to say, have sometimes had the contrary effect to what they pretended, viz they did by no means take off all obstacles for a just understanding and estimation of this Shakespearean master-piece. This is why I ask for pardon, if I did not always hit upon the right. I shall now endeavour to give an account

1^o of the sources of Shakespeare's Hamlet, where I shall have to write

a) an historical essay on the tale of Hamlet,

b) on the old play of Hamlet,

2^o of the two editions (1603 and 1604).

History of the Tale of Hamlet.

The commentators of Shakespeare's Hamlet are unanimous in pointing out the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus as having written the eldest known tale in which the subject of this piece can be traced.⁶

Of course it cannot be expected that Saxo was as exact an historian as we possess in our century. He did not hesitate to mingle fable with historical facts if it better suited with his arrangements; and thus later inquiries have not only shown Hamlet to be no historical person at all, though he is (loosely enough) connected with the old Danish king Roric (about 680 after J.-C.⁷), but also proved him, together with the chief persons of the tale, most evidently to belong to the earliest figures of our northern mythology.⁸ One of the advantages drawn from these learned investigations is that they furnish us with priceless sources for a just estimation of the characters in Shakespeare's Hamlet.

The myth had the following development.⁹ The regular change of day and night, of summer and winter in this part of our planet, led to the conception of a god with double

¹ cf. Thimm's *Shakespeariana* p. 3.

² Nicholas Rowe 1709. cf. Elze's *Sh.* p. 6 (bottom lines).

³ Hebler, *Aufsätze über Sh.* p. 21, hopes that this is only a beginning, because it would not be worth while to have made too much about Sh. and now to be already at an end of it.

Southey said: Comments upon Sh. keep pace with the national debt (cf. *The Times*: 26. Dec. 1860).

⁴ cf. Elze, *Sh.'s Hamlet*, p. III.

⁵ Angus (*Handbook of English Lit.* p. 307 note) remarks: „In Bohn's edition of Lowndes's *Bibliographers Manual*, *Sh.* and *Shakespeariana* fill more than a hundred pages of double column & small type.“

Thimm's „*Bibliotheka Shakespeariana*“ from 1564 to 1871 contains 118 pages which number — after a subtraction of about 30 pages filled up with short essays-multiplied by 30 (on average sum that cannot be said to be taken too high) leaves still more than 2600 publications.

⁶ The best edition of it is to my knowledge in *Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica*, Ed. Müller et Vel-schow, Havniae 1839, vol I p. 135—161.

Elze (*Shakesp.'s Hamlet*, p. IV foot-note) gives an account of the various editions of Saxo Grammaticus.

⁷ Zinzow, p. 24.

⁸ Simrock, *Handbuch der Myth.* § 82. cf. also Simrock, *Quellen d. Shakesp.* I, 125 f.

⁹ cf. Zinzow, *Die Hamletsage*. 9: Deutung der Hamlet-Sage.

nature having relation to our earth, which became equally personified in her turn. Out of the totally different qualities of this god sprang two persons just as different: the one bright, beneficial; the other dark, gloomy, envious, but both very powerful. Their desire to get into possession of the fair yielding goddess Earth leads to struggle and alternate conquest, in which, however, none is ever completely vanquished. The defeated is quietly plotting to displace the other in her favour. During this time he gains strength and vigour. Such a one must be thought more youthful. He is consequently made a son of the former, and filial love forces him to revenge the death of his father. Being the son of the same goddess whose love the present husband gained, and seeks to retain, he remains at court, and we get acquainted with facts out of his life, the earliest times not excepted. In his childhood he does many actions which appear to be very ridiculous, even foolish; but they are for the wiser men ominous tokens of an aspiring mind. He proves to be victor in his turn. Yet in due time he must again cede to his enemy according to the eternal change of all earthly things.

These fundamental features translated into human notions, and naturalised at the Danish court during the 12th century, furnish us Saxo's tale. Interwoven with manifold reflexions and would-be learned allusions, by an awkward narrator of the 16th century, it is the French history as told by Belleforest. Adapted to the time of Elisabeth of England and her splendid court, by the powerful mind of the greatest tragedian of the world, it meets us in quite a different shape which, however, does not deny its first origin, and which for this very reason that it retained some features of the old tale, shows some incongruities which have often proved a doleful crux for the interpreters.

Saxo tells us as follows:*)

Of two brothers installed as governors of Jutland by the king Roric of Denmark, Horvendile became soon renowned as a bold pirate. He added the greatest lustre to his fame by vanquishing, in single combat, Koller a king of Norway, who had longed to fight with such a rival. After having also slain Kollers' warlike sister, the victor, with liberal hands, gave to Roric all the great riches that fell to him according to previous stipulations of the combatants, and, by this, he not only gained the goodwill of this king but even the hand of his daughter Geruthe whom he had longed to possess. With her he had Amleth, the hero of our tale.

The great luck of Horvendile had filled the heart of his brother Fengo with envy; and he murdered Horvendile as soon as an occasion offered, when he had become strong enough to do it with impunity. To varnish his fratricide with seeming legality he gave out to have done so in order to save Geruthe from the hatred and the bad treatment of his brother. When Fengo, afterwards, added his marriage with Geruthe, to this wicked action, Amleth thought it best to feign madness as the safest way to hide his scheme of revenge for the murder of his father. He was lucky enough to penetrate into, and therefore to frustrate, the means which Fengo employed to find out his real state of mind. At first, a fair young lady was to meet Amleth, as if by chance, in a solitary place in order to try if he would yield to the impressions of love. He escaped this trap by the help of a foster-brother who gave him timely warning; and the lady herself promised silence. On the second trial, when a courtier had offered to overhear Amleth during a private meeting which he was to have with his mother, the prince found the eavesdropper under the rushes that lay on the floor, and after having butchered him, he threw the body into a pit for the pigs to feed on. His mother thought he had done this in his state of disorder, and was very sad at it; but Amleth, after having tasked her about the criminal course of life she led with the murder of her husband, confessed her why he dissembled thus; he enjoined her silence with regard to what he had told her, and succeeded to bring his mother back to a virtuous life.

Fengo was now resolved to kill the prince. But as he was afraid to offend Amleth's grandfather Roric, he charged the king of England to do it for him. The prince, however, on his journey to England, discovered his uncle's plan. He secretly altered the letter of Fengo, which contained the order for his death and turned the destruction designed towards himself, on the bearers of the letter, bidding the English king, in the same time, to make him his son-in-law.

At table with that king, the prince disdained to touch anything because — as he told his attendants — the dishes and the drinks were polluted, also that his hosts were of no pure royal descent. The king, upon inquiries, finding all this to be true, wondered much at the prince's wisdom, and did not hesitate to fulfil what he thought Fengo had desired him to do.

*) I shall only give a summary of his tale.

When Amleth came back to his country, his obsequies were just celebrating, because he was believed to be dead. Amleth made his return a signal for great carousing, and succeeded to intoxicate all the courtiers, after which he caused a net to fall over them. He had asked his mother to prepare it in the hall, before he parted for England. Then he put fire to the house, so that all the friends of the king perished, and he slew Fengo with his own sword.

The next morning, when Amleth saw that the people remained indifferent about the destruction which he had caused, he came forth, and pronouncing a long speech, he told them that it had been his wish to free the country from a tyrant, and to take revenge for the murder of his father. All were satisfied, and admired his acuteness.

Of course he feigned no longer the distracted now, but began to lead quite another and rather a pompous life. He had the history of his life engraved upon his golden shield, chose a great number of handsome youths for his personal attendants, and went with them to England to fetch his wife.

But the king of England, though loath to do any harm to his son-in-law, was nevertheless bound by former oaths to revenge the death of Fengo. Therefore he sent Amleth to the Scottish queen to ask her in marriage for him, because she was known to kill all who came to court her. However, it was a lucky circumstance for our hero that she did no such thing this time, but rather fell in love with him.

Having previously altered the king's letter to that effect, she persuaded Amleth to take her himself for his second wife, in which this queen the more succeeded, as Amleth did not suspect her forgery with the letter and, therefore, did not know how much that marriage was against the king's wishes.

On his coming back to England his father-in-law met him with an army, but Amleth overcame him the second day by a trick, so that he could soon return to his country, where he lived some time, and afterwards fell in a war against Viglet the successor of Roric.¹

The tale contains many features of Shakespeare's Hamlet. There are the two brothers: Horvendile, the elder, father of Amleth, is the old Hamlet of the play; a valiant man who slew a king of Norway, who dearly loved his wife, and was murdered by his brother.

His brother Fengo sat for king Claudius, that persuasive schemer. We see him married to his brother's wife after having murdered him; he is sharp enough to see Amleth's aim, tries to find him out, wishes to deprive him of his life, but sets others to do it for him, and is killed at last by the prince.

There is Gertrude, as little changed in the play as her name: easily to be persuaded for anything, extremely fond of her son, whose part she takes as soon as she knows that he is not mad, and why he feigns this distraction of mind.

The lovely Ophelia grows out of that fair lady whom we see used as this one was, to discover the dissimulation of Hamlet. How dearly she loved him! It is not necessary to doubt that Saxo thinks her the daughter of a courtier, as she is with Shakespeare the daughter of Polonius, the all-officious courtier, who hid himself in Gertrude's room, and there found his unexpected death.

The foster-brother who was so friendly to Amleth, meets us again in the shape of Horatio, and the two attendants who were to lead Amleth to certain death, but carried a Uriah's letter to England, are made schoolfellows of the prince, and are baptised Rosenerantz and Guildenstern.

The hero himself is, of course, not less to be recognised: He dissimulates in order to hide the schemes of his revenge; he is suspected of it, but, far from being found out by any

¹ Furness (A new var. ed. vol. IV p. 88. (2nd vol. of Hamlet.) says that Theobald (in his edition of Hamlet p. 1) and Scottowe (Life of Shakespeare 1824. II p. 1) have given abstracts from Saxo. In German authors which I have read, I found the earliest German extract of this tale in Eschenburg's translation of Shakespeare out of 1806. (W. Shakespeare's Schauspiele, vol 12, p. 618 f.) The very earliest is of course the poem by Hans Sachs on this subject: „Fengo, ein Fürst in Jütland erwürget seinen Bruder Horwendille“. (cf. 2nd vol of his works, Nürnberg, 1541: 3rd part, p. 111 u. 112.) After Eschenburg it has repeatedly been reprinted in full or otherwise, in the Latin and German languages. In 1842, A. Schmidt (Anmerk. zu Sh.'s Dramen p. 184 f.) gave a translation of it as far as it is parallel to Shakesp.'s play. Hoffmann's essay (cf. Herrigs Archiv III, p. 380—382.) contains also an abridgment. In 1857 summary of the whole was made by Elze. (Hamlet p. V.) The same was done by Hebler in 1865 (Aufs. über Shakesp.) and by Simrock (Quellen des Sh. I, 103.) in 1871. Moltke reprinted Saxo's text (Quellen zu Hamlet IX—XXXV.) with a literal German translation facing it.

one save the king, rather astonishes by the „method in his madness.“ He fools the courtiers set to lead him to pleasures, that they might search his mind, and kills the one who wished to overhear him. The reproaches with which he tasks his mother, are here as severe as there. Hamlet also frustrates the desired effect of his projected English journey, returns unlooked-for after having altered the letter which his companions were bearers of, and finally he kills his uncle.

So far they are alike, but there are many points in which they differ. Hamlet's character is rather changed, and, by this, also many of the attendant circumstances. But here I touch upon a point which is disputed enough. For, as by one the piece is considered to be a tragedy of fools, but by another the most thoughtful, so the one calls Hamlet a dreamer, the other a great philosopher, and a third one a magician; this one makes him represent Germany, that one Shakespeare, and another Protheus. All these opinions show at least that Hamlet is no more the methodic and active avenger of his father's death. The prince could not remain one who is laughed at by the courtiers; he is well educated, speaks euphuism, is entirely a man of his time — perhaps even of our century — a philosophic mind that is less ready to act than to reason with himself. His everlasting hesitations prevent him from doing anything of what he had taken upon him, and he leaves all to chance. This becomes especially obvious in Hamlet's starting for England to no purpose, and his return without being seen to act now, so that he is nearly dead before he has killed his uncle. The prince is naturally brought together with persons and situations suiting him and his time. His father is not openly murdered; a ghost tells Hamlet of his unnatural end; the prince puts no implicit trust in him, but does not altogether scorn his testimony. Hamlet domineers over all the courtiers with whom he has to deal. His love to Ophelia, her insanity and death are new features of Shakespeare, as well as the scenes where he speaks with the gravedigger and Osrick, and also that he has a friend to trust in, and to converse with. Whether it was just or not that also Hamlet dies in the end with his uncle has been often argued on.

The question is now: Did Shakespeare use Saxo's tale for his Hamlet, or had he other sources?

There are only a few critics who believed Saxo was known to our poet. I have not been able to read any one of their reasons for this view. However, as their opinion has not found any advocates, I do not fear to have lost anything. It is Theobald mentioned by Furness¹ as having been the first who noted that the plot of Hamlet is derived from Saxo Grammaticus. And Elze² says, Dr. Grey and Mr. Whalley (middle of the 18th century) thought Shakespeare took his subject for Hamlet immediately from the Danish historian. Many think Shakespeare used the French translation of Saxo; others believe he had an English one; others again limit his merit to the revision of an old play. The first of these suppositions has no great probability, because we have nothing at all to show that Saxo was known in England in Shakespeare's time, whilst it is proved of a French work which contained a translation of Saxo's tale. Now it is a fact that Shakespeare, in general, kept close to his sources, and as the French translation differs in many respects from Saxo, we ought to have from this circumstance, a means to find out the source of Hamlet, if it is to be looked for in these tales. However, apart from that general resemblance of which I have spoken already, I have found only one passage where there is a closer relation in the expressions between Shakespeare and the tale; and this one speaks against Saxo. It is I, 4, 17 f. „This heavy-headed revel, east and west Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other nations: They clepe us drunkards etc.“ This Shakespearean reflexion is to be found in the translation, but not in Saxo's text.³ And a little further on the lines „So, oft it chances in particular men. That for some vicious mole“ — down to: „To his own scandal“⁴) may be thought to have relation to: Aussi il est bien vrai, que l'homme qui se laisse aller apres un vice, et forfait destestable, estant la liaison des pechez fort grande, il ne se soucie en rien de s'abandonner à un pire, et plus abhominable.⁵

It was during the 16th century that Saxo's tale found the way into France, where François de Belleforest (1530–1583)⁶ together with Boistean, translated the „Histoires Tragiques“⁷

¹ Hamlet II, p. 88.

² Hamlet XVI, note 2.

³ Bellef. f. 96 B.

⁴ I, 4, 23–38.

⁵ Belleforest, f. 76 A.

⁶ cf. Ersch & Gruber's Encycl. „Belleforest“; Blankenburgs Zusätze zu Sulzers Theorie der sch. K. vol 1, 512.

⁷ Contenant plusieurs Discours memorables, la plus part recueilly des histoires advenues de nostre temps. Le tout reueu, corrigé u. augmenté; Par F. de Belle Forest, Commingeois, Paris 1582. 7 vol.

chiefly taken from the Italian of Bandello. The fifth volume¹ contains 12 tales, the third of which has the title „Avec quelle ruse Amleth, qui depuis fut Roy de Dannemarch, vengea la mort de son pere Horuendille, occis par Fengon son frere, et autre occurrence de son histoire“.

Belleforest announces in his preface that the tale which he is going to relate, will show what outrageous actions the desire of great men to get into power may lead to; and how a well deserved „revenge“, though it sometimes arrives rather late, will always be the just consequence of it, as the Roman history and other examples have often proved long ago.

There are at first a few points in which the French translator differs from Saxo.² With Belleforest, Fengo kills his brother openly during a banquet, with the help of some men whom he has secretly won for this enterprise.³ Saxo only says:⁴ He killed him, when time and place were convenient. — Geruthe had adulterous intercourse with her husband's brother already during life-time of the former, according to Belleforest;⁵ whilst in Saxo's tale⁶ Fengo gains her only after the death of Horvendile.

Besides this there are some omissions as well as additions. To the former belongs f. i. the fight between Horvendile and Koller; and that Horv. also defeats Koller's sister Sela; also how Amleth was cautioned by a foster-brother of his to beware of the snare prepared for him. Bellef. omits likewise how the youths were bantering with Amleth on the way towards the wood on that occasion. To explain the strange behaviour of the prince at the court of the English king, Belleforest amply details on the pretended art of the northern people to know supernatural things, and that also Amleth was instructed in this science.⁷ He does not tell us of Amleth's beautiful shield, nor does he describe Amleth's expedition to Scotland, nor does he say anything of the means which Hermutrude employed to get married to the hero of the tale, and no mention is made of the strange battle between Amleth and his father-in-law.

Additions of Belleforest are: Amleth, on account of his dissimulation, placed at the side of Amleth with Brutus and king David⁸. — Queen Geruthe assures Amleth that she had no part in the murder of her husband, and warns him to manage his revenge with policy, because Fengo mistrusts him.⁹ — Belleforest calls drunkenness a vice over-common among the Germans and other northern peoples.¹⁰ — When Amleth is to go to the queen of Scotland, Belleforest compares him to Hercules, Bellerophon and Uriah.¹¹ Towards the end of the tale

¹ I used the copy belonging to the library of the grand-duke of Weimar.

² Elze (Hamlet p. XIII f.) and Hebler (p. 96) have already compared them. Moltke (in his still incomplete Sources of Hamlet) gives the French and the English texts on opposite pages, for a more convenient comparison of them (p. XXXVI—XCVI). It is a pity that the editor thought it necessary to modernise the French text in some degree. There are also some omissions in it.

³ feuille 76 A: Ainsi Fengon ayant gagné secrettement des hommes, — se rua un jour en un banquet, sur son frere lequel il occist etc.

⁴ p. 138.

⁵ fol 76 A: il avait incestueusement souillé la couche fraternelle, abusant de la femme de celui, duquel il devoit autant pourchasser l'honneur, comme il en poursuivoit: et effectua la ruine.

⁶ p. 138.

⁷ fol 92 B: Quant aux operations magiques — — — — revierons à Amleth institué en ces folies, suyvans la coutume de son pays.

⁸ fol. 78 B: Voila un grand traict de sagesse, et bon esprit en un ieune Prince, que de pourvoir avec un si grand defaut à son avancement, et par son abaissement, et mepris de faciliter la voye, à estre un des plus heureux Roy de son aage: Aussi iamais homme ne fut reputé avec aucune sienne action plus sage et prudent que Brute faignant un grand desvoyement de son esprit: veu que l'occasion de telle ruyne: fainte de son meilleur, ne proceda iamais d'ailleurs, que d'un bon conseil, et sage deliberation, tant à fin de conserver ses biens, et eviter le rage tu tyran le Roy superbe, qu'aussi pour se fair une large voye de chasser Tarquin, et affranchir le peuple oppresse souz le joug d'une grande et miserable servidute.

Aussi tant Brute, que cestuy-cy, ausquels vous pouvez adiuster le Roy David, pui faignist le forcené entre les Royteletz de Palestine, pour conserver sa vie, monstrent la leçon à ceux qui malcontents de quelque grand, n'ont les forces suffisantes pour s'en prevaloir, ny se venger de l'iniure receuë.

⁹ fol. 86: Toutefois, mon filz, et doux amy, si tu veus rien faire pour celle qui ne merite point le nom de mere en ton endroit, ie te prie de conduire sagement tes affaires, nestre hasté, ny trop boüillant en tes entreprises, n'y t'auancer plus que de raison à l'effet de ton dessein. Tu voys qu'il n'y a homme presque en qui tu te puisses fier, ny moy femme à qui t'osasse auoir dit vn seul secret, lequel ne soit soudain rapporté à ton aduersaire etc.

¹⁰ fol. 96 B: —ne laissant les hanaps vuides: et abbreuva la Noblesse de tel sorte, que tous estans chargez de vin, et offusquez de viandes, fallut que se couchassent au lieu mesme où ils avoyent prins le repas, tant les avoit abestis et privez de sens, et de force de trop boire, vice assez familier, et à l'Alemand, et à toutes ces nations et peuples Septentrionaux.

¹¹ fol. 116 B: A lire ceste histoire il sembleroit veoir en Amleth un Hercule envoyé çà et là par

he finds Hermitrude to bear resemblance to the wife of Mithridates, and to Zenobia queen of Palmira;¹ and her forsaking Amleth makes him exclaim against the fickleness of women.² Amleth's dotting upon Hermitrude recalls to his mind the end of Hercules and Samson³ a. s. o. — Thus he everywhere seeks to show how versed he is in books.

Our French narrator also seasons his tale with various moral and other reflexions. He speaks of traitors who must pay the interest of their perfidious actions;⁴ why we owe veneration we owe to our hereditary princes,⁵ complaining at the same time of their reserve, and that it is so difficult to approach them;⁶ also that slanderers are more honoured at court than virtuous persons;⁷ that great persons who have once left the path of honesty often turn the most perverted people.⁸ To conclude with, he wishes the reader may not follow the bad examples which he finds in old tales, but rather surpass the heathens in virtue, as the Christian religion exceeds their superstition.⁹

In spite of all these tedious remarks, and in spite also of the bad French it was written in, the novel of Belleforest nevertheless met with a favourable reception,¹⁰ if we may be allowed to come to that conclusion from the number of editions that have been issued¹¹ since the year of 1564. It was even translated in England. By whom and when cannot, however, be said. The earliest known copy is in Capell's collection¹² (Cambridge), and was printed in 1608. It is a „bald, literal, and in many respects uncouth“ translation,¹³ repro-

Euristee (sollicité par Junon) de tous costez du monde, là où il scauroit estre quelque peril evident, pour l'y precipiter et luy faire perdre la vie: ou bien pue ce fust un Bellerophon mandé à Jobatez, pour l'exposer à la mort, ou (laissant les fables) un Urie destiné per David pour servir de but pour faire passer la colere des Barbares.

¹ fol. 122 A: —elle, pour le coifer d'auantage, et l'encourager d'aller à sa defiaite, luy promist de le suyre partout, et de iouyr de mesme fortune que luy, fust elle mauuaise, ou telle qu'il la souhaitoit, qu'il luy feroit cognoistre de combien elle surpassoit l'Angloyse en affection en son endroit, et que la femme estoit malheureuse laquelle craignoit de suiure, et accompagner son mary à la mort: si qu'à l'ouyr parler, on eust dit que cestoit l'espouse d'un Mitridate, ou Zenobie Roynie des Palmireniens, tant elle s'avectionnoit à la matière, et faisoit parade de sa constance, et ferme amitié.

² fol. 122 B: Ainsi n'est deliberation de femme, que une bien petite incommodité de fortune ne demolisse, et face alterer et changer, et que le chagement du temps ne peruertisse, tellement que les cas fortuits, subiects à la sagesse d'un homme constant, esbranlent et ruent bas la loyauté naturellement glissante de se sexe variable, et sans nulle assurance ne fermeté, ven que tout ainsi que la femme est facile à prometter, aussi est elle pesant et paresseuse à tenir, et efectuer ce qu'elle aura promis, comme celle qui est sans fin, ny limite en ses desirs, se chatouillant en la diuersité de ses aises, et prenant plaisirs en choses nouvelles desquelles tout aussi tost elle perd la souuenance.

³ fol. 123 B: car l'homme à beau estre fort et sage, que si les chatouillements de la chair le surmontent, il s'auillera, et arrestera apres les beautez, et deuientra fol, et insencé à la poursuite des femmes. De telle faute a esté chargé le grand Heroule des Hebrieux Samson, et le plus sage d'entre les hommes, suiuant ce train, y a fait diminution de son sens.

⁴ fol. 87 B: —et ne sera en la puissance de ses courtisans, que ie n'en despeche le monde, et qu'eux mesmes ne l'accompaignent aussi bien à sa mort, comme ils ont esté les peruers conseillers de la mort de mon pere, et les compaignons de sa trahison, assassinat, et cruelle entreprinse. Aussi est-il raison que tout ainsi que traistrement ils sont fait mourir leur Prince, qu'avec pareille, mais plus iuste, finesse, ils payent les interez de leur felonnie.

⁵ *ibid*: Et puis que la gloire est le salaire des vertueux, l'honneur, et le prix de ceux qui fônt seruice à leur prince naturel, pourquoy le blasme n'accompagnera il les traistres, et la mort ignominieuse, ceux qui osent mettre la main violente sur le Roys sacrez, et qui sont les amis et compaignons des Dieux, et ceux qui representent leur maiesté, et image?

⁶ fol. 89 B: —les Roys d'alors n'estoient pas si superstitieux que maintenant, et ne tenoyent leur presence si chere, et n'estoient si chiches de leur familiarité, qu'on les voit en se temps, où les Royetelets et Seigneurs de peu de consequence, sont aussi difficiles à estre accostez, qu'estoient iadis les Monarques des Perses, ou comme l'on diet encor du grand Roy de l'Ethiopie, qui ne permet qu'on voye à descouvert sa face laquelle il couvre ordinairement d'un voile.

⁷ fol. 76 B: Il n'eust ia faute de tesmoins approuuans son faict, et qui deposerent selon le dire du calomniateur, mais c'estoyent ceux mesmes qui l'ayoyent accompaigné, comme participans de la conuie, et qu'au reste en lieu de le poursuivre, comme parricide et incestueux chacun des courtisans luy applaudissoit, et le flattoit en sa fortune prospere, et honoroyent les calomniateurs, plus que ceux qui mettans en ieu les vertus du deffunct, eussant voulu punir les brigans, et assassineurs de sa vie.

⁸ fol. 77 A: Que scauroit on voir de plus effronté, qu'une grande, depuis qu'elle s'esgare en ses honnestez?

⁹ fol. 124: tascherons non de les imiter, estant l'imitation peu de chose, mais à les surmonter, ainsi que nostre Religion surpasse leur superstition.

¹⁰ It was the time when collections of novels flourished in England, France u. Italy: cf. Drake, vol. I, p. 544 note †. cf. also Blankenburgs Zusätze I, p. 512 f.

¹¹ cf. Elze, Hamlet p. XIII.

¹² Furness, Hamlet II, 88.

¹³ as Collier (Introduction to the Hyst. of H.) justly styles it.

ducing the French text almost in every detail. However it contains two alterations which are equally to be found in Shakespeare's tragedy. For this reason some of the Hamlet commentators think that the English tale was made up after Hamlet. These are the differences: Belleforest's courtier hides himself underneath a quilt or carpet¹ (Belleforest puts „loudier“ for Saxo's stramentum the rushes strewn on the ground), upon which Amleth, imitating a cock in his feigned madness, jumped when he entered his mother's room. The English tale on the contrary has an arras (hangings at another place)² behind which the listening courtier stands. This one also makes Hamlet crie „a rat, a rat“³ when he kills the courtier, of which nothing is to be found in Belleforest⁴, nor in Saxo either.

Hebler⁵ somewhat facetiously proposes to explain that outcry in this way: The English translator not knowing what to make of „quelque cas caché“,⁶ boldly conjectured „rat“ for cas, as well as he mistook mollify⁷ for desmolisse.⁸ It is true that the letters r and c in those old prints may be easily confounded, but surely quelque cas caché was not the most difficult passage which the translator had to deal with.

Already Capell, when speaking of the „history of Hamlet“, wondered much⁹ that no other expression of the tale but only „a rat, arat“ had come out of it into Shakespeare's play. He was sure that it was of much older date than the impression which he possessed; „perhaps but little later than its original, which was written in 1570, and published soon after“.

Drake, on the authority of the inscriptions in Stationers' Hall, stated¹⁰ that a complete translation of Belleforest came out in 1596,¹¹ but that parts of it, the history of Hamlet included, were known in England already before that date. Vol. I, p. 541 he quotes Paynter, who in the second part of his Pallace of Pleasure (1567)¹² says „I doe omit for this present time Sundry Novels of mery devize, reserving the same to be joyned with the rest of another part, wherein shall succede the remnant of Bandello, specially sutch, sufferable, as the learned French man François de Belleforest hath selected“ etc. We learn from this at least that Belleforest was known in England shortly after the middle of the 16th century. Someone may have translated his tragical tales, as Paynter those of „mery devize“; or he himself may have published the one or the other singly,¹³ as he is not known to have compiled another collection for his third volume.

Farmer pretended¹⁴ „a Novel, called the Historie of Hamlet was his (Shakespeare's) original: a fragment of which, in black letter, I have seen“. This has misled the commentators to admit of an early translation, in England, of the tale in question. However a black letter copy does not prove that it was printed before Shakespeare's play, for this kind of prints ceased to appear only in king James's time.¹⁵

Malone¹⁶ and Collier¹⁷ concluded (from reasons which I shall better mention when I treat on the old play of Hamlet) that the English history of Hamlet existed before 1589.

Of the other Shakespeare students, none of whom is positive, because there cannot be found a copy of the tale anterior to 1608, I mention especially Gervinus,¹⁸ Simrock¹⁹ and Delius²⁰ as those who yet think with the eldest commentators of Hamlet,²¹ that of the

¹ Bellef. fol. 81 B.: se cachat souz quelque loudier.

² Hazlitt, Sh's libr. I vol. II. p. 235 f.; Moltke LV.

³ ibid.

⁴ cf. fol. 81 B.

⁵ p. 100.

⁶ cf. Bellef. fol. 81 B.

⁷ Hazlitt, Sh. libr. p. 277; Moltke p. XCVII.

⁸ Bellef. fol. 122 B.; Moltke p. XCVI.

⁹ cf. Furness, Hamlet II p. 87.

¹⁰ Shakespeare and his time I. p. 543 f.

¹¹ The Hystorie of Hamlet. London. Imprinted by Rich. Braddocke etc. Reprints of the tale gave: Collier (Shakespeare's Library), Hazlit (Shakespeare's Library), Moltke (Quellen zu Shakespeare), and Furness, without the last chapters, however (in his Hamlet II).

¹² Collier, Stationers Register, p. 165.

¹³ Hazlitt, Warton's History of Engl. Lit. IV, p. 337.

¹⁴ cf. Elze, Hamlet, p. XVI: 2nd note.

¹⁵ ibid p. 267.

¹⁶ Plays and poems of W. Shakespeare vol. VII p. 163.

¹⁷ Introduction to the Hyst. of H. (Shakespeare's Library).

¹⁸ Shakesp. II p. 59.

¹⁹ Quellen des Sh. I p. 121.

²⁰ Introduction to Hamlet p. 360.

²¹ Eschenburg may be mentioned still: vol. XII, p. 618 and 623.

history of Hamlet as told by Saxo and Belleforest, there must have existed an English translation before Shakespeare wrote his Hamlet.

Elze¹ has some doubts to accept of it. (Tschischwitz² is of the same opinion). He thinks Shakespeare took his subject from the French novel. The English version, very likely, may have been written after Shakespeare's famous tragedy had made the subject a favourite one with the English people. The translator, half unconsciously, adapted an incident and a phraseology which had become almost proverbial. That the passage „a rat, a rat“, made a deep impression on the audience receives confirmation from the fact that Shirley in his *Traitor*, 1635, imitated this scene almost word for word.

Elze has in his favour the analogue which Shakespeare's *Lear* and *Pericles*³ offer, the first of which gave rise to the ballad of the same name⁴, as the latter was the source of the novel of *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*⁵, a fact which we see repeated still in our days, and our old *Volksbücher* had a similar origin.⁶

Friesen, repeating Elze's conjecture⁷, declines to treat further on this question, because Elze does not absolutely deny the existence of an earlier English version, and because the Hamlet critic has to deal with matters of greater importance.

Furness, in his excellent edition of *Hamlet*⁸ is also of Elze's opinion, and states that this commentator's arguments have not yet met with the general adoption which they deserve. He thinks Elze's explanation to be at least less forced than the other which maintains that two such striking passages were invented by a translator of a manifestly inferior stamp, and transferred from his work to Shakespeare's.

Which is now the right one of all those different opinions?

Of course, nothing certain can be said about it, as long as we have no other than the existing means to settle the matter. The old way to explain it may be right; and I am well aware that we cannot say, There was no such tale anterior to Hamlet, because none has come down to us. But Elze's reasoning is the most convincing, and as I am unable to give another or a better way of explanation, I willingly subscribe to it.

Thus little importance can be ascribed to the English tale of Hamlet; more value has Saxo's as furnishing the first palpable trace of the subject; but the greatest rests with the French one, especially if it can be proved that there was no old play of Hamlet which could have served as a source for Shakespeare's masterpiece. I shall treat on this question on the following pages.

¹ Hamlet p. XV f.

² Introduction to Hamlet p. IX.

³ Briefe, p. 5.

⁴ Percy's Reliques, vol. I. book II, number 15.

⁵ cf. Simrock, Quellen des Sh. I, p. 213.

⁶ cf. Gervinus, Gesch. der d. Dichtung II., 341 f.

⁷ Friesen, Briefe, p. 4.

⁸ p. 89.

On the Old Play of Hamlet

It was very natural to think that Shakespeare used an old play as source for his Hamlet, for we know he did so, when he wrote some of his other pieces¹, and his contemporaries likewise never hesitated to avail themselves of this easy mode to produce something new², especially if a novelty was required to attract visitors to the play-house. Now, the fact seems to be that a piece treating upon the subject of Hamlet existed before Shakespeare wrote what we now consider the standard text of this piece. It is now to be shown, when it was written, who was the author of it, and what it was like, all of which is rather difficult for want of incontestible proofs. The critics are divided into two chief parties, some considering Shakespeare, others Kyd to be the author of the old play; Knight is the principal champion for the one, Collier for the other. With regard to the time when it was written, almost every one has another opinion.

The whole matter chiefly rests upon three³) apparent allusions to Shakespeare, and informations drawn from contemporary writers, which I am going to state. We possess out of Shakespeare's time:

1^o an „Epistle“ by Nash prefixed to R. Greene's Menaphon or Arcadia (published in 1589) where the author, referring to the makers of plays of that day, says:⁴ „It is a common practice now a daies, among a sort of shifting companions, that runne through every art, and thrive be none, to leave the trade of Noverint, whereto they were borne & busie themselves with the indeouours of art, that could scarcely latinize their necke-verse if they should have neede; yet English Seneca read by candle-light yeeldes manie good sentences, as Bloud is a beggar & so fourth: and if you intreate him faire in a frostie morning, he will afford you whole Hamlets. I should say Handfulls of tragical speeches“.

2^o Henslowe's diary⁵, found at Dulwich College, with the following note: „9 of June 1594 Rd at hamlet Vij“

3^o The following passage by Th. Lodge in Wits Miserie and the Worlds Madnesse:⁶ „One of these Devils named Hate-Vertue: you shall know him by this, he is a foule lubber, his tongue tipt with lying, his heart steeld against charity, he walks for the most part in black, under colour of gravity, and looks as pale as the Visard of y^e Ghost which cried so miserably at y^e Theatre, like an Oisterwife, Hamlet, Revenge!“

These are indeed very doubtful informations leaving room for various interpretations, to which they have been subjected in consequence.

Thus Malone believed that a play of Hamlet was on the stage before 1589, and that probably Kyd was the author of it.⁷ He quotes as proof Nash's epistle which he thinks to be a lash at Shakespeare, and „which should have appeared before 1592, when Gabriel Harvey printed Foure Lettres and certaine Sonnetts, especially touching Rob. Greene in one of which his Arcadia is mentioned.“

Yet Malone had to change his mind several times with regard to this.

¹ f. i. Henry V., Richard III., Measure for Measure.

² cf. Henslowe's Diary.

³ A greater number is generally mentioned; but I leave out those which have no regard to the old play.

⁴ cf. Furness, Hamlet II, p. 5 — also Elze, Hamlet p. XVII.

⁵ Collier, Henslowe's diary.

⁶ Laing, Lodge's Defence of Poetry etc., p. XLIV.

⁷ Works, VII, 169 edition of 1821.

In our country Eschenburg first drew the attention to this matter¹ without, however, inquiring himself into it.

The next in time was the Englishman Dyce. He was convinced² that Nash and Lodge alluded to a lost old drama of Hamlet.

As Dyce believed Nash's „Epistle“ to have been published already in 1587, Collier from this and the statement of Henslowe's Diary, thought that the old play existed already in 1587. He added³ to this proposition: „It is often alluded to by contemporaries, and there is no moments doubt that it was written and acted many years before Shakespeare's tragedy of the same name was produced“; but he is not certain whether it was Kyd's play.

Further treated on this question Ulrici,⁴ who adds to Collier's result that this old play cannot probably have been Shakespeare's first sketch of his tragedy, as it contains quotations from Seneca, (whom it was thought Shakespeare could not read, though there existed translations of this author at that time).⁵ Ulrici thought it likely, that Lodge's passage hinted at Shakespeare's play, because he was no friend of this author.

For Schmidt⁶ Nash's testimony was sufficient to prove the existence of an elder Hamlet of which, probably, Kyd was the author.

Hoffmanns essay⁷ contained nothing new except the assertion, for which he failed to give his authority, that Kyd's old play had the title „The Revenge of Hamlet“.

Gervinus differs from Collier only so far as to consider⁸ the old play to be Shakespeare's.

Brown (C. A.) in Shakespeare's autobiographical Poems⁹ is fully convinced that Nash speaks of Shakespeare and his play of Hamlet, before it was enlarged. He thinks it impossible for any one else but Shakesp. to think of such a wonderful invention, for the dramatic effect of the story, as that change from an open slaying, with some show of cause, to a secret murder, involving the necessity of the ghost's appearance to seek revenge.

Delius has no new reasons for the existence of the old play, but he has those produced before him, well separated¹⁰ from those which have regard to the quartos of 1603 and of 1604. He leaves it undecided whether it is a work of Shakespeare or of some other author.

Knight, not long before, had attempted to prove¹¹ that the old play could be nothing else but the first sketch of Sh.

The clearest and most complete exposition of this matter has Elze in his Hamlet.¹² His results are the following:

1^o To speak of an old non-Shakespearean Hamlet was only an act of necessity for those who could not think that the above-stated testimonies (as well as some others, viz. Taylor played the part of Hamlet in 1596¹³ — Hamlet is not mentioned among Shakespeare's plays in Mere's Palladis Tamia, nor in some other books on literature out of that time¹⁴) might yet be proved to agree with the supposition of an early Shakespearean Hamlet.

2^o Hamlet belonged in its first form to the earliest pieces of Shakespeare, and attained its excellence by successive modifications, as Knight has proved to evidence.¹⁵

Elze gives two more reasons, why he thinks Shakespeare wrote his first Hamlet not long after 1585:¹⁶ the verses (V, 1, 150) „these 3 years I have taken note of it; the age etc.“ considered together with the publication of Lyly's Euphues (in 1579), a work which made „that the toe of the peasant came so near the heel of the courtier to gall his kibe,“ gives about this time, if a few years are allowed for this corruption of the English language to have spread

¹ Shakespeare's Schauspiele vol. 12. 624.

² Preliminary note to Hamlet p. 100.

³ Hazlitt, Shak's Library I, vol. II, p. 213 and 214.

⁴ p. 450 f.

⁵ Hazlitt, Warton's Hist. of Engl. Lit. IV, p. 272.

⁶ p. 194.

⁷ Herrig und Hoffmanns Archiv III, p. 382.

⁸ II, p. 96 and 97.

⁹ I rely here entirely on Furness, p. 6.

¹⁰ Hamlet, p. 359 and 360.

¹¹ Shakespeare Studies p. 61 — I shall have to speak of that further on.

¹² p. XVII f.

¹³ I did not find any proofs for that.

¹⁴ Webbe's Discourse of English Poetry, 1566; Puttenham's Art. of Engl. Poesy, 1589; Harrington's Apology of Poetry (1591.)

¹⁵ Studies of Shakesp. p. 39 and 51.

¹⁶ Hamlet, p. XXII f.

among the lower classes. — The other is: It is possible that the birth of his twins Judith and Hamnet, which probably drove him to London, made him pick out the subject of Hamlet; and some time after the death of his son (1596) he took it up again.

Friesen, who is of the same opinion as Elze, produces nothing especial,¹ excepting his refutation of Chalmers subtleties,² viz. that Hamlet I, 1, 105—107 (The main motive etc.), I, 1, 119—121 (— the moist star, etc.) and I, 1, 123—125 (And prologue to the omen etc.) prove, with sufficient certainty, the true epoch of Hamlet to be the beginning of 1597.

Hebler follows here Delius.³

Hazlitt is convinced⁴ (he does not give any of his reasons) that Shakespeare, for the subject, resorted to the earlier drama, and made the piece, what it is, out of the inexhaustible resources of his own marvellous mind.

The editors of the Clarendon Press Series believe that Shakespeare had nothing to do with Hamlet before 1602 (cf. further below).

Tschischwitz finds it little probable⁵ that two Hamlets existed about 1587, to which conclusion Knight's and Elze's proofs, he says, lead us with necessity. Therefore, he thinks it more likely that Shakespeare remodelled the work of his predecessor (Kyd) who died in 1595, very soon after this year, without changing much the plot nor the persons either. It is his conviction that Shakespeare's play cannot possibly be alluded to in Lodge's *Wits Miserie*, because it nowhere contains such an outcry of the ghost as „Hamlet, revenge!“ But the last of these critics is mistaken in the proofs which he forwards⁶ in order to show that Kyd was the author of the old play. Charles Knight in his *Studies of Shakespeare*, p. 61 does not give it as his opinion taken out of Lowndes's *Bibliographical Manual*, that an old play of Hamlet by Kyd existed in 1589. Knight says most distinctly in the place quoted by Tsch. „Mr. Skottowe and Mr. Lowndes have certainly mistaken conjecture for proof. Not a tittle of distinct evidence exists to show that there was any other play of Hamlet but that of Shakspeare; and all the collateral evidence upon which it is inferred that an earlier play of Hamlet than Shakspeare's did exist, may, on the other hand, be taken to prove that Shakspeare's original sketch of Hamlet was in repute at an earlier period than is commonly assigned as its date.“ If Tschischwitz had read Knight's *Studies*,⁷ he could not have overlooked it, as this passage follows immediately after the one he quoted.

When pondering on those testimonies above, it always struck me at first that „whole Hamlets of tragical speeches“ in Nash's *Epistle* must not needs be an allusion to an old play of Hamlet. Of course, the expression would have been rather extraordinary, if it was chosen to denote a great number. But there is in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* the phrase „It let a parish of such Clotens blood“,⁸ and also Hamlet's „sea of troubles“ is a similar expression. The word Hamlets being, however, printed in another character than the rest — as I learn from Malone,⁹ — this changes the matter altogether, and gives great, though no absolute, probability for the existence of an old play of Hamlet.

But who was the author of it? Those who name Kyd or Shakespeare, have no more sure proofs than those who hold that we still possess the old play in the quarto of 1603; and here and there suppositions must go for proofs. If we allow — as it is generally done — that the phrases „shifting companions“, „runne through every art“, „thrive be none“, and „leave the trade of Noverint“, are meant to allude to Shakespeare, we do it because we want to have some facts with which we are able to fill out that blank in Shakespeare's life from the birth of his twin-children, — when he probably left Stratford for London, apparently without the means to support himself in that town — to the time when he was accepted as an actor, and an author for the theatre. And we may do so, because Shakespeare's works prove him to have been well acquainted with the professional terms that belong to those occupations which are said to have filled up that time. But if we do so, we must equally admit that Nash knew all Shakespeare's whereabouts anterior to his London life; or that people then spoke of Shakespeare already as some of us now do, or at least

¹ Briefe, p. 47 f.

² Chalmer, *Suppl. Apol.* p. 350 f.

³ p. 102.

⁴ *Shakesp. Libr.* I, vol. II, p. 212.

⁵ *Hamlet*, p. X.

⁶ *Shakesp.-Forschungen* I, p. 2.

⁷ Knight, *Studies of Sh.* p. 61.

⁸ It is *Cymb.* IV, 2, 169. — cf. Friesen.

⁹ *Works*, VII, 169.

something like it, to permit those myths, with which later fabulists¹ have surrounded Shakespeare's life, to assume a palpable shape. We must believe that the poet really shifted from one trade to the other; that he butchered in a tragical style; that he was schoolmaster for some time; that, after he had come up to London, he had his horse boys before the theatre; or that he studied English Seneca² after the day's toil in the office of an attorney, as Elze has it in his Shakespeare. The phrase „thrive by none“, in that case, would not necessarily include that also the poet's trial to start as a dramatic poet, had failed. In the mildness of the blame thrown upon the author, we may find a reason to conclude that he was still a beginner. This again would help to explain why, on being repeated in 1594, Hamlet brought Henslowe only the small share of 8 shillings. Perhaps bad players impaired the estimation of the piece by acting so pitiably — some actor might have conceived the role of the ghost as in „Fratricide Punished“, where he is so liberal with puffs and boxes on the ear, which ought to have at all times spoiled any good effect — that the piece was laughed at. Hamlet shows what bad acting might be seen then.³

And if we allow that Shakespeare, being but a new-comer in 1589, may have produced something which did not immediately fill with rapture all the play-going people, we may easily believe the piece spoken of was Shakespeare's play; for Knight's supposition⁴ that he wrote the first sketch of Hamlet during the same period when he produced the other plays with more or less bloody scenes, is admissible.

Lodge's remarkable passage is surely a proof that a Hamlet existed before or in 1596 (as Henslowe's Diary furnishes the proof that it existed in 1594, and that it was then already an old one, because Henslowe did not put his usual sign for new ones); and it proves perhaps even that it was Shakespeare's. For, though Tschischwitz maintains, Lodge's pamphlet cannot possibly allude to Shakespeare, because his piece does not contain any passage like „Hamlet, revenge!“; I feel inclined to say, it does contain this passage, but Lodge did not write it in full. Those who were expected to read his pamphlet, would perfectly know whose piece Nash meant, when he quoted nothing else but the two most important words which, being pronounced with the rest, must have most forcibly struck the ear of the auditory: „Hamlet, (if ever thou didst thy dear father love,) Revenge (his foul and most unnatural murder)!“

Thus it is my opinion that, though no really positive and incontestible facts can be drawn from the testimonies for an old play, as they allow rather different interpretations, it is yet very probable that a Shakespearean Hamlet existed in 1589 (which, perhaps, is still extant in Q¹, and) which the poet remodelled afterwards.⁵

¹ Aubrey, Davenant, Betterton, Cibber.

² I do not think that this expression means a translation of Seneca, but rather some English poet who was thought to equal that Latin author.

³ III, 2, 2—39.

⁴ Studies of Shakesp. p. 39.

⁵ The third point of this part of my essay, what this Shakespearean Hamlet was like, will be treated on below.

The two Editions (1603 and 1604.)

Our present century which is so rich in rare literary and other discoveries, has also helped us to make a great step towards the final solution of the Hamlet question with regard to the editions of this play.

During the first two decenniums of it we hear Drake,¹ Eschenburg² and Malone³ still speak of the quarto of 1604 as being the earliest known one. But they wisely called it „the first edition hitherto discovered.“ It bears the following title: The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke. By William Shakespeare. Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie. At London. Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be sold at his shoppe vnder Saint Dunstons Church in Fleetsreet. 1604.

The quarto is scarce enough, only three copies being known of it; but it has been carefully reprinted several times.

In 1823 it lost its preeminence with regard to time. A certain Sir Henry Bunbury who loved to collect old plays, found⁴ a small volume in quarto barbarously cropped and very ill-bound⁵ which contained, along with eleven other Shakespearean pieces „The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke By William Shakespeare. As it hath benee diuerse times acted by his Highnesse seruants in the Cittie of London: as also in the two Vniuersities of Cambridge and Oxford, and else-where. At London printed for N: L. and John Trundell. 1603.“⁵

This copy, now in possession of the Duke of Devonshire, who bought it for a considerable sum, unfortunately had the last page wanting. It was however supplied by the discovery, in 1856, of another copy which contained the last leaf, though the first was wanting. This one is deposited in the British Museum.

As the edition of 1603 has no printer's name, it has been conjectured that it was printed by the same J(ames) R(oberts) who had already, in 1602, the intention to issue a Hamlet, and for this reason caused the following entry to be made in the Stationers' Register, most probably in order to assure the print of the piece for himself: „[1602] XXVI⁶ July James Robertes Entred for his Copie vnder the handes of master Pasfeild and master waterson warden A booke called „The Revenge of Hamlet, Prince Denmarke“ as it was latelie Acted by the Lord Chamberleyne his seruantes . . . VI⁴“ (Steevens found this entry in the Stationers Registers cf. Furness, Hamlet II, 12).

The duke of Devonshire's copy of 1603 was very soon reprinted, even in our country, in Leipsic, already in 1825,⁷ and was hailed at by old Goethe⁸ as the first sketch of Shakespeare, showing nowhere, when compared with the edition of 1604, any peculiar „pentiment“, any serious omission or change, though it had now and then obliterated some too strong, yet natural, terms: a valuable present for Shakespeare's passionate friends.

Collier⁹ and Ulrici¹⁰ did not think it was Shakespeare's first draught of the tragedy

¹ Sh. and his time II, 391.

² Sh.'s Werke XII, 625: note.

³ Works of Sh. VII, p. 168.

⁴ Furness, Hamlet II, p. 13.

⁵ cf. Timmins reprints of the two quartos. I shall denote them by Q¹ (= Q. A. of Delius) and Q².

⁶ That it came out of his printing office has been supposed, because it bears the initials of the same publisher N(icolae) L(ing).

⁷ by Fleischer.

⁸ Sämmtl. Werke, Cotta 1868, XXXI, 276.

⁹ Introd. to the tale of Hamlet: Hazlitt's Sh.-library p. 214.

¹⁰ p. 450.

which he enlarged and improved as it appeared in 1604; but that it was „printed from a manuscript taken down in short-hand from the players' mouths as the piece was delivered on the stage.“

Knight opposes Collier's view most decidedly.¹ It is his opinion that the copy of 1603 gives us the play as it was originally written by Shakespeare. „The Hamlet of 1603 is a sketch of the perfect Hamlet, and probably a corrupt copy of that sketch. His first conception was an early one; it was remodelled, „enlarged to almost as much again as it was“ in the beginning of the 17th century. This first copy being then of comparatively little value was piratically published.“ It is from the difference which the two quartos show in that scene, where Hamlet is questioning about the „tragedians of the city“ that Knight proves a considerable space of time to be between the composition of Q¹ and Q². „Novelty“, „humour of children“ etc, he says, in the first copy, points to a period when plays were acted by children, when the novelty of such performances, diminishing the attractions of the tragedians of the city, compelled them to travel.

The Children of Paul's presented pieces subsequent to 1584, according to Collier, but not during the time between 1591 and 1600. In the latter year they are proved to have played again, and they were even allowed to continue when, in 1600, an „inhibition“, an order of the Privy Council for the restraint of the immoderate use of the play-houses appeared. Knight concludes from this, that the date of the augmented play (Q²) must be about 1600.

Delius materially agrees with Knight, because the edition of 1604 differs too much from that of 1603 to allow of Collier's conjecture.

The change of names and scenes etc appears to him made by Shakespeare himself, but the text of 1603, as we possess it now, never came out of Shakespeare's hands; a clumsy revisor spoiled it.

Mommsen shared, and very ably defended, Collier's opinion² (It is a great pity that his unusual penetration was employed for such a spurious work as Collier's Perkins Shakespeare). He considers the edition of 1603 only valuable in so far as the passages which it has equal with the edition of 1604, may be supposed to have existed on the stage already before 1602. Q² he proves to be the genuine text of Shakespeare.³

According to Grant White, Q¹ derives — as he shows by internal evidences — from the MS of Q², and its shortness and mutilations are due to the haste and secrecy with which the copy for it was obtained and put in type. „The earlier version is merely mutilated, not a sketch; the latter, merely perfect, not elaborated.“

Gervinus who agrees with Knight and Delius, maintains⁴ that all the changes which Q² has against Q¹ served only to develop the character and the nature of the hero who had to fulfil a task for which he did not possess sufficient strength.

Elze, in his Shakespeare,⁵ says Q¹ is less a corrupted than an earlier publication, disapproved of already when it appeared. It seems to him⁶ that Hamlet could not attain such excellence unless Shakespeare worked it over and over again. He thinks it is not impossible that it was at first merely treating on the subject of revenge for murder. Q² and Q¹ are to be considered as the last elaboration and the last but one, respectively, out of Shakespeare's hand. The date of Q² is about 1597 or 1598; but Elze does not condemn the opinion of those critics who think the time from 1600 to 1602 to be the right one.

Also Staunton⁷ and Dyce believe the edition of 1603 Shakespeare's first (according to Staunton: very early) conception of Sh.'s play, but that large allowances must be made for omissions and corrections due to the negligence of those through whose hands the MS passed.

Friesen examines this point very minutely. After having shown Collier's opinion as undefensible, he accepts of those of Knight and Delius, with some modifications, however, as follows:⁸ There is great probability that Q¹ was carelessly printed from a copy made for this

¹ cf. Furness, Hamlet II, p. 14 and Studies of Shakesp. by Knight, p. 65.

² Neue Jahrbücher für Philol. 1855, p. 108

³ Jahns Jahrb. p. 171. (1855).

⁴ Furness, p. 27.

⁵ II, 97 f.

⁶ p. 406.

⁷ Hamlet, p. XXIV.

⁸ I rely here again on Furness, (p. 23) as I have been unable to get their works.

⁹ Briefe, p. 56—103.

purpose, which abounded already in corruptions of the text, and in marks of carelessness, though these were not important enough to stamp the copy as a spurious one.

Tschischwitz¹ finds Q¹ to be a mutilated corrupted copy of Sh.'s Hamlet, which was printed from a dictated MS. This one originated from Q² but had some variations, and had been worked up for the stage in 1600. The text of Q¹ was played by another than Sh's company.

Different from all these suppositions are those stated, with diffidence, by Clarke and White² (Clarendon Press Editors, preface to Hamlet, p. VIII) viz. That there is nothing to prove any connection of Shakesp. with Hamlet before 1601. There was an old play on the story of Hamlet, parts of which are still preserved in Q¹. About the year 1602 Shakespeare took this to remodel it. Before he had done with it, it was printed, and we have this in Q¹. In Q² we have for the first time the Hamlet of Shakespeare.

It appears that Furness inclines towards the same opinion.

If we now compare the texts of both editions — Timmins' reprints³ are made very handy for this purpose — we find 1^o whole pages alike with only slight and immaterial differences, f. i. p. 4, 12, 13, 24, 25, etc.

There are 2^o passages otherwise corresponding, where only one word is replaced by another, often a synonyme of it as:⁴

2 upon your watch	u. y. houre
2 the partners of m. w.	the rivals . . .
3 the bell then towling one	. . . beating one
3 question it	speake to it
4 thought and slope of my op.	grosse and scope . . .
6 faded like a guilty thing	started . . .
6 at his sound	at his warning
6 walke abroad	sturre .
16 costly thy apparrell	c. thy habite
17 tenders of his love	t. of his affection
22 it posteth through	it courses thr.
a. s. o.	

Then there are 3^o expressions which are put for others of a somewhat similar sound, and which were apparently unintelligible for the ear, or for the faculties, of the copyist:

3 it horrors me	it horrowes me
4 Marshall stalke	martial st.
5 seale compact	seald c.
6 in approued mettle	unimprooued m.
„ or hoorded treasure	extorted tr.
8 impudent	impotent
72 God yeeld you	good dild you
23 the Martin to be near	the matin . . .
50 contrary matters	country m. etc

This we observe 4^o especially in the use of proper nouns:

8 Voltemar	Valtemand
Gertred	Gertrard
Gilderstone	Guyldersterne
Rossencraft	Rosencraus
Leartes	Laertes
42I th'arganian beast	38II Th'ircanian beast
53 Guyana	Vienna
90 Oosell	Ossa

¹ Shakespeare-Forschungen I, 9 ff.

² Furness, p. 31 f.

³ Hamlet by W. Shakespeare 1603; Hamlet by W. Shakespeare 1604. Being exact Reprints etc. London 1860.

⁴ The quotations on the left hand side are from Q¹, those to the right from Q²; the numbers at the beginning of the lines indicate the page in Timmins' reprints.

We equally find 5^o verses in which both editions have the same words, but in an inverted order:

- 7 So gracious, and so hallowed is that time So hallowed, and so gracious is that time
 22 And turnes the thinne and wholesome blood like eager droppings into milke. And curde like eager droppings into milke. The thin and wholesome blood.
 30 My Lord, the Ambassadors are ioyfully Returnd from Norway. Th'embassadors from Norway my good Lord Are ioyfully returnd.

Or 6^o passages where a transposition of whole lines has taken place:

11I Weele teach you to drinke deepe etc is to be found on page 13II; p. 13 the first 15 lines are entirely inverted.

Here I may add the snatches of songs of Ophelia which are quite the same in both editions but appear in Q² in quite a different order.

7^o In many places the copyist did not know the end of a verse:

3: Therefore I haue intreated him a long / with us.

Wel, sit we downe, / and let us heare Bernardo speake of this.

4: Afore my God, I might not this beleue, / without.

6. Which happily foreknowing may preuent, / O speake to me.

6 For which they say you Spirites oft walke in death, / speake.

53 My spirites growe dull, and faine I would beguile / the tedious time with sleepe. etc.

8^o Prose is put for verse and vice versa:

21: Haste me to knowe etc

47 Hamlet with the players

53 the bottom lines

76 Ophelia distributing flowers.

84 The clowns' conversation.

A great difference is to be found 9^o in the length of the two quartos, as their title page already indicates; for, though Q² is not „nearly as much againe“ — this expression will do well as a bookseller's announcement — it is yet considerably longer than Q¹, because the latter has a, a line or two wanting here and there, even such which are necessary for the understanding f. i. 11: „Nor shall you make mee truster“ requires „I would not heare your enimie say so“ which we find in Q² — 20: „That beekles ore his bace“ cannot be understood without the line which stands before it in Q² — „Something is rotten“, on the same page, has no connection at all in that place. — 27: „Now happily hee closeth“ has no sense, without that which has been left out.

Or b, Q² has short and long passages much more extended and developed, as 14: the dialogue between Ophelia announcing Hamlets derangement to her father; 51: the play in the play; 60—65 Hamlet with his mother; 78—81 the king calming, and arranging matters with, Laertes a. s. o.

And c, it has also parts of, or entire, scenes which do not exist at all in Q¹, thus: 7 Claudius' opening speech; 11 how the murdered king loved his wife; 57 the king settles with the two courtiers that Hamlet is to go to England; 70 Hamlet speaking to the captain of Fortinbras; and his soliloquy after it; 90 Hamlet's conversation with Horatio before Osrick enters.

Of great weight is 10^o that vast change in the order of several scenes especially in the 2nd and 3rd acts, after Polonius has told the king what he thinks to be the cause of Hamlet's madness. It is as follows in the two quartos:

1603

The soliloquy To be or not
 Hamlet with Ophelia
 H. with Corambis (fishmonger)
 H. with Ros. and Gild.
 Corambis joins them (Jephta)
 H. with the players
 Solil. (Why what a dunghill idiote)
 The king with the courtiers
 Polonius' plan to hide himself

1604.

H. with Polon. (fishm.)
 H. with Ros. and Guild.
 Pol. joins them
 With the players
 Solil. (O what a rogue)
 The king with Ros. and G.
 Solil. To be or etc.
 H. with Ophelia
 The king with Pol. (H. is to go to Engl.)

There is **11°** the difference in three names: Corambis, Montano and Albertus for Polonius, Reynaldo and Gonzago respectively, besides this, three other persons have no name at all in Q¹. Bernardo and Francisco are distinguished as first and second sentinel only, though the name of the former is contained in the text; and Osrick is denoted by „a bragart gentleman“.

12° Some lines or expressions are altogether senseless in Q¹, as

43: „Enough my friend t'is too long“ after 6 verses which the player has spoken;

50: Lady, will you give me leave „and so forth.“

89: Wilt drinke up vessels.

13° Q¹ has a better text in a few passages:

3 What art thou that thus usurps the state, in which the maiestie of buried Denmarke did sometimes walke? What art thou that usurpst this time of night, together with that faire and warlike forme in which etc.

22 So Lust, though to a radiant angle linckt So but though to a r. a. l.

50 Capitoll Capitall.

Both copies, it must be said, bear the stamp of great carelessness either on the part of the printer or of the writer. Q¹ especially appears to have been done in a great hurry.

14° Grammatical peculiarities as p. 48: there be fellows; there be of them that will laugh; some that keepe one sute; gentlemen quotes his iests downe; p. 49: To glose them that loves etc. are common to both copies, as also the elision of to have and of prepositions, thus 39^l: a the way; 40^l to tell mee a the Players; o monday last; 50^l feed a the ayre; 37^{ll} a monday morning; 73^{ll} i'th cold ground a. s. o.

Some of these exterior differences have also helped to produce **15°** a change in the character of some of the persons. Not only a maturer pen but also a more philosophical mind is clearly denoted by this. It will be seen from the 3 lines out of Laertes' injunctions to his sister, which begin „For nature, crescent etc., and still more from the parts of Hamlet and his mother in the two quartos. In Q¹ the queen approaches nearer her prototype in Saxo's tale who was at first ignorant of her second husband's guilt, and who aided Hamlet in his revenge. She swears — — „as I have a soul — —

I never knew of this most horrid murder“.

And she promises „I will conceal, consent and do my best“ etc.

In Q² though she is in neither copy represented as having taken an active part in Hamlet's revenge, she merely says: „Be thou assured, if words etc.“

I think, her death as a punishment for not having redeemed her guilt, is thus more justified.

Hamlet, the same in his actions, is shown in Q² from the more contemplative side of his nature, especially in his soliloquies; his madness is less strongly marked.

All these resemblances and differences, and the various interpretations to which they gave room, have made it rather difficult to settle the question with regard to the relation which the two editions have to each other, or to the MS (MSS respectively) of Shakespeare.

I suppose the exact way how this tragedy was conceived and brought to its excellency, will never be satisfactorily ascertained. The nature of the proofs which can be produced, makes the result always rather dubious. For we must not trust too much neither the statements of the title page, nor the poets allusions to anything out of his time, nor all the testimonies of all the contemporaneous writers; nor was the printing at that time done in such a way as to furnish sure foundations for anything which is to be proved. Q¹ is announced as giving the text as it was played several times, and it has indeed about the length to be such a copy. That which has been stated under 9^a must then be considered as remnants of unhappy cuts of the managers. — The copy bears Shakespeare's name. The piece has also neither any internal nor any external proof against Shakespeare's authorship, not even the irregularities detailed above can be thought to furnish them. They are accounted for, if we suppose either that it was printed from MS taken down in shorthand from the players' mouths (for this number 3 and 4 (p. 16) might be, and have been, produced as proofs; and 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9^a, 12, 13 and 14 would not speak against it), or that it was printed from an imperfect copy of the prompt book, or from the play-house copy (this is founded upon 1, 5 and 11; and

3 4, 6, 7, 8 and 13; also 9 and 12 might be added as not strictly opposing this view); or that it was stolen from the authors' papers (then most of those points would fall upon the careless printer). The one or the other of these suppositions may be right, or at least in part; I believe no one can prove the contrary in such a way as to cut off all objections. But it cannot be admitted, that both quartos derive from the same manuscript of Shakespeare. This is proved by number 2, 9^b and 11; and especially 10 and 15 which contain the most important differences, are most decidedly opposed to it, and cannot be explained unless we grant that Shakespeare wrote the piece twice. Q¹ was earlier of course than Q². The verse which reads „7 years“ in Q¹ cannot be taken literally, because it would fix the date of Q¹ in about 1486, seven years after the appearance of Lyly's *Euphues*. Q² has 3 years in that passage; this would of course equally denote an indistinct space of time. Or may it be supposed that this peculiar mode of speaking had become, during the last three years previous to the writing of the amended copy, such an intolerable nuisance that Shakespeare took it into his mind to attack it once more, as he had done already before? We may easily suppose it, because it had taken too much root already, so that even Shakespeare himself did not keep free from it. For it cannot be denied that Q² abounds much in euphuism.)

The title page further states that Q¹ had been „diverse times acted by his Highnesse seruants“. These players are the former Lord Chamberlain's men, who were called the King's players since 1603.² As Shakespeare was a member of this company, they are sure to have had the genuine text, and it is to be supposed that they guarded it well when it became famous. That it pleased well in 1602 shows Roberts' desire to secure the printing of it for himself, in that year. As it won so much favour at that time, we must suppose that it was then a new work of the author, and thus the date of composition of it would be the first or the second year of the 17th century. But can we really believe that the quarto of 1603, even without those irregularities which we have to blame, could have possibly gained such a great renown. This is not very probable. Then again, who were the players that acted the piece also in Oxford and Cambridge and „else-where“? We know that His Majesty's players had the privilege to act in the capital, in the whole country of Surrey and in the universities. But the colon behind London leaves us room to think that others played it in the universities and else-where. Had they also the text according to the true and perfect copy?

I should propose the following explanation: The inhibition of 1600 drove many players away from London. They possessed Shakespeare's first Hamlet which, with the more refined London auditory, had not proved attractive and, therefore, had been forsaken — as I have already mentioned above. The piece pleased, and was applauded to in the country; and this would have been the case even if it had had a still rougher form. For, it was not so very long ago that Tamerlan and the like pieces had been admired even in London. This made Shakespeare take up the subject again and create the amended copy, which was played „by his Highnesse seruants“ at London, and justly esteemed a good one. Roberts, longing to print it, took the old one in default of the better copy. But he took no trouble to have it well printed, because he felt it was a bad one which, however, he had no fear would sell well. Thus he was the cause for the publication of the genuine copy, which the editors took pains to announce as such a one to save the honour of Shakespeare; and it was this piece which pleased „the wiser sort“ as Harvey wrote.

To think that Q² was Shakespeare's, involves that also the change of names in the two quartos is due to the hand of this poet.

That the names, specified above under number 11, read at first as Q¹ has them, seems to be a fact which would perhaps be proved most satisfactorily, if Cohn's hypothesis could be said to be incontestible, viz. that the German Hamlet or Fratricide Punished came out of England, and existed in Germany already so early as 1603; because also this piece does not name the two sentinels, and it has a Corambus for chamberlain of the king. It is true that Shakespeare's writings furnish no other example for such a change; this is, however, though a strong, yet no indisputable reason, why Shakespeare should not have effected one here.

That Q² was according to the true and perfect copy of Shakespeare has never been contested, I believe, and is proved by the other quartos subsequent to it, which read nearly

1 V. 1, 150.

2 Elze, Sh. p. 272.

everywhere the same. The great pains which Furness and the editors of the *Clar. Press Ser.* have taken to publish such splendid editions of Sh. ought to decide me to prefer their views to all others; but I was unable to warm myself for them.

As actors have always had, or taken, the liberty to alter and especially to shorten a piece, it cannot astonish that Heminge and Condell, in their folio of 1623, adopted a text which is somewhat different from Q², and which sometimes even comes nearer to Q¹. I should fancy they printed the text as it had become in the hands of the players, during these several years.

Repeating the results of this essay, I maintain the following as being to my mind most likely the way how Hamlet was produced — but I must in the same time add the remark, that I am far from thinking to have given a final solution of the Hamlet difficulties as far as they are touched upon in this short essay — : Shakespeare took his subject for Hamlet out of the French version of Saxo's tale of Amleth (the English one was made up after his play). There was no old play of Hamlet anterior to Shakespeare's on this subject. The earliest prints which we possess, especially that of 1603 are corrupted copies of two different compositions of Shakespeare, whose date is about 1589 and 1601 respectively. Q¹ was printed piratically, Q² gives the true text except in a few places, where carelessness of the printer or the editor is plainly visible.

I should be glad if any one of my kind readers would point out to me where he thinks I have been mistaken. In the same time, I beg to remark — as an excuse for the blunders which I may have made — that this essay has not originally been written for our „Programm“. But as my colleague whose turn it was to do this task, fell dangerously sick before he had finished his manuscript, I was prevailed on having this printed, and I yielded though I had no leisure to improve upon what had been written some time ago.

The works which I have used, are the following ones, besides the others which have been mentioned in the notes:

a. Texts:

Belleforest, *Histoire Tragiques*, tome V, Paris 1582
 Hazlitt, *Shakespeare's Library* I, vol. II, 1875.
 Moltke, *Quellen zu Shakesp.* 1871 (incomplete)
 Timmins, *Hamlet 1603*, and *Hamlet 1604*, reprints 1860.

b. Essays, Commentaries etc.

Elze, *Abhandlungen über Sh.* 1877
 Halliwell, *Life of Sh.* 1847.
 V. Hugo, *Shakespeare*.
 Mommsen, *Der Perkins-Shakespeare*, 1854.
Neue Jahrbücher für Philol. 1855.
 Percy, *Reliques*.
 Prolegomena to the writings of Sh., London 1788.
Shakespeare Illustrated, London 1753.
Shakespeare-Jahrbuch III, IX, XIII
 Simrock, *Quellen des Shakesp.* 1872.
 and others.